

This week, I report on some interesting observations from RCK, in response to my article of March 3, 2011.

He said, *“I like the article but I do not agree that there should be the expenditure of millions of taxpayers dollars to install cameras / radars that cannot be maintained or systems that cannot be adequately manned. All of this ties in to people's cost of time (in running these things, administering etc.) and to what end? Speed is not rigidly enforced in smaller countries for good reason—speed traps are a revenue item—not a safety item. The stats on accidents would show that in many cases driving under diminished abilities (due to drugs, alcohol, tiredness etc.) are the real causes of accidents. But a head-on collision at 40 mph is as deadly as one at 100 mph—so don't mislead the uninformed.*

*“Further, if you contend that all the roadways are over-crowded (which they are), then how could anyone have space to speed? Again, on this premise the call to enforce speed limits is inconsistent with your analysis.*

*“I expected a better analysis of that aspect of speed and enforcement. The Autobahn is the fastest and safest highway on the planet. They spend time enforcing lane discipline and proper vehicle maintenance—big difference in honesty of their approach. So let us permanently discard the farcical notion that limiting speed has anything to do with making highways safer. It is a deceptive ploy to rob citizens of their hard earned dollars. In Toronto they look for and pull up the SLOW drivers on the 400 series highways because those drivers are the ones usually intoxicated!*

*“Some of the accidents with shredded OLD vehicles are evidence that speed could not be a*

*causal factor. And by the way, speed limits were first introduced in the US to reduce fuel consumption during the oil shock of the 70's. They then realised that it is a huge cash machine, so was income taxes when first ‘temporarily’ introduced in the US.*

*“Therefore I expect a detailed discourse on whether speed enforcement should be a priority of the police force, rather than chasing real criminals and doing stakeouts to catch real criminals. Nothing is wrong with highway patrols to catch cell users, red-light runners, etc. But speed enforcement is right where it belongs—low priority. If they want revenue they should put 100 police to chase after [name called] et al to recover billions, but don't rob motorists of the outrageous sums now being demanded for traffic tickets. Another article should discuss if asking for one month's pay is a fair penalty for making a wrong left turn or parking badly, etc. Perhaps they should raise the fines of everything to \$10,000, no \$20,000.00, and then we will have absolutely no vehicle infractions! I expect a more balanced analysis next article.....!”*

Sometime ago I reported on a study of the Central Statistical Office (CSO) traffic accident data between 2001 and the first half of 2005, and I repeat the relevant points as follows:

- Approximately 60% of all fatal traffic accidents occurred between 6:00pm and 6:00am; and,
- Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays together accounted for 55% of all fatal traffic accidents, with 20% of that figure on a Saturday as well as on a Sunday.

These are periods when there is usually no traffic congestion on the highways.

Despite the widespread belief of complete freedom from speed limits, some speed regulations can be found on the Autobahns. Many

sections do indeed have permanent or dynamic speed limits ranging from 80 to 130 kmph. Also, some sections now feature night-time and wet-weather speed restrictions, and trucks are always regulated. Bicycles, mopeds, and pedestrians are specifically prohibited from using the Autobahn, as in the laws of TnT with respect to highways, yet it is not uncommon for a backhoe to be lumbering along the highway, the driver completely unconcerned about its impact on the traffic. Passing on the slower lane (the right in their case and the left in ours) is strictly prohibited! Slower vehicles must move over to allow faster traffic to pass, and drivers should stay in the slow lane except to pass. Fat chance that happening here!

It is not correct to say that speed limits were first introduced to the USA in the 1970's. Prior to 1974, individual US states set speed limits within their boundaries, and highway speed limits across the country ranged from 40 mph to 80 mph. The Arab-Israeli conflict changed that dramatically, as President Nixon signed a federal law lowering all national highway speed limits to 55 mph in order to force Americans to drive at speeds deemed more fuel-efficient, thereby curbing the U.S. appetite for foreign oil. Today, speed limits across the USA vary between 35 and 40 mph in congested urban areas and 75 mph on long stretches of rural highway.

The developed world has been rapidly decreasing their road fatality rates; France in particular. Their first step in the early 1970's was speed-enforcement systems. Today, there are more than 1,950 automatic enforcement speed cameras on French roads, with implementation of additional cameras ongoing. Along with the introduction of cameras, tougher penalties were introduced for speeding, including

streamlined punishment for drivers who exceed the posted speed limits, tougher penalties for dangerous behaviour, automatic identification of offenders based on vehicle license plates and fixed penalties for certain offenses, including the running of major road stop and traffic signals.

I have also earlier reported that the total cost of a road accident comprises the following: (a) Resource costs, or lost output. This is the average wage or earnings loss of the person(s) involved in the accident; police and administration; medical and ambulance; and damage to property. (b) Subjective costs: pains, suffering and shock; loss of amenities of life; loss of expectation of life; inconvenience and discomfort; exemplary damages. It was also showed that the total annual road death costs could range from \$0.2 billion to \$0.8 billion, or the average individual road death cost could range from \$0.9 million to \$3.6 million. So every road death likely costs this country at least \$1 million. Therefore, even if the Authorities give priority to revenue collection from speed enforcement, there is likely to be major savings from preserving road-user lives.

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